



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

3. Calendar and Communications

- Shellfish Task Force Presentation on Small Salt Water Estuaries

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted this presentation is a result of recent meetings of the Shellfish Task Force. He introduced members of the Shellfish Task Force and Shellfish Commission. Mr. Vincent provided a background on the establishment of the Shellfish Task Force and the Fort Hill Homes Sewer Project.

Neil Brown of the Shellfish Task Force thanked the Town Council for supporting the Task Force in the past. Mr. Brown reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on small salt water estuaries.

Sidney Van Zandt read a statement in support of further protection for watershed areas and estuaries.

Mr. Vincent noted that the Town has been contacted by the Nature Conservancy who would like to use grant monies to do additional research on Groton's estuaries. In the future, he will ask for a referral and seek Town Council approval of the effort.

Mr. Brown addressed questions from Councilors.

- Town Attorney Letter/Packet Concerning Weber Parcel

This packet of information was distributed at the meeting. Mayor Watson asked Councilors to review the information.

4. Approval of Minutes

2009-0041 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of January 20, 2009 and January 27, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Bond, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2009-0040 Reauthorization of School Bonds

Discussed

The Town Manager explained that the bonds for the three schools -- Fitch High School, Catherine Kolnaski School, and Northeast Academy -- are approaching the end of the five year life. This extension will protect the Town's investment while the projects are closed out, and assure the greatest amount of reimbursement from the state.

Mayor Watson noted that the motion would address bond reauthorizations for all three schools.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2009-0019 FYE 2010 Budget

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger distributed an update on 2009 revenues. Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, noted that as of December, the Town expects \$700,000 less in federal impact aid. Anticipated expenditures are under budget by approximately \$1,000,000, of which \$461,000 is from the Board of Education budget, so there is still a small cushion. Mr. Pandolfo will have revenue updates in a couple of weeks that reflect receipt of second installment payments of taxes. Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern that the Board of Education typically encumbers funds at the end of the fiscal year, therefore the Town should not count on the \$461,000. The Town Manager noted that these are estimates which have been reviewed with the Business Manager, but perhaps that would be a good topic of discussion when the Council meets with the Board of Education. The Town Manager emphasized that everyone should avoid end of budget year spending sprees because of unexpected revenue shortfalls.

Mr. Pandolfo distributed a summary of his budget submittal and alternative scenarios to the Council. There are 21 full-time employees in Finance in four divisions. 90% of the Finance budget is associated with personnel. A level service budget results in a 3.2% increase. It was noted that the following budget impacts are cumulative.

2% increase: elimination of cost allocation study; elimination of legal ads for bids; use of an on-line surplus disposal process; reduction in postage; reduction in overtime; and reduction in professional development.

0% increase - elimination of seasonal help in the tax division; further reduction of professional development; reduction of materials and supplies; and reduction of one full time employee to part time.

3% and 5% reductions impact more positions.

Discussion followed on debt service payments. Councilor O'Beirne noted that this is just one area of the budget that is not discretionary, so that even if Town Operations and the Board of Education are held to 0%, there may still be increases.

Director of Administrative Services Doug Ackerman noted that a level service budget is slightly over 2%. This includes not filling a part time clerical position and filling a Telecommunicator IV position with a Telecommunicator III. There is also a slight reduction in tuition reimbursement and a reduction in training.

0% increase - reduction of full time position to part time; reduction in overtime; reductions in operating costs; reduction in contractual services for labor negotiations; and a reduction in

supplies.

3% decrease - elimination of one full time and one part time position; further reduction in overtime (impacting response time in dispatch); and reduction in training costs.

5% decrease - elimination of half a position; further reduction in overtime; and elimination of maintenance contracts

Mr. Ackerman reviewed his level service budget in more detail, by division. He noted that the Information Technology division has taken on additional duties so he is reluctant to reduce personnel in that area.

Mr. Ackerman then reviewed the benefits side of the budget, which includes self-funded plans. This is a \$6 million budget with a 7.6% increase overall. Specific areas are as follows:

- Retirement: 4.8% increase. Mr. Ackerman explained that the rate of return on investments is smoothed over five years so the impacts from the economic downturn are not significant this year, but will increase year to year.*
- Health Insurance: 17% increase. This takes into account a 12% renewal rate, applying less fund balance, and shifts in coverage.*
- Workers Compensation: After an actuarial evaluation, it has been determined that the Town will not be making a contribution.*
- Life Insurance: Relatively flat*
- Heart and Hypertension: Flat*
- Health Cost for Retirees: Flat*
- OPEB: It is projected to level fund this account*

The Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:31 p.m. for the special meeting of the Town Council. The Committee reconvened at 8:41 p.m.

2009-0034 Disposition of Eastern Point School Property

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to enter executive session at 8:42 p.m. to discuss the disposition of the Eastern Point School property, and to invite the Town Manager to attend..

The motion carried unanimously

The executive session concluded at 9:10 p.m.

2009-0015 Town Clerk Compensation

Not Discussed

2008-0168 Town Manager Annual Evaluation

Not Discussed

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.